ty isn't a personal choice, bu

seems to encourage wholesale these days.

I personally find it much more "immoral" to attempt to write legal discrimination of *any* form into our state and nation's Constitution under the disguise of legislating morality. That is an obscenity beyond words.

Kudos to you, Dunedin Mayor Bob Hackworth.

Irene Ferris, Clearwater

Speaking of sins, what about hubris?

Re: Homosexuality is about morality, not civil rights or discrimination, letter by James M. Hammond of Dunedin, May 1.

I am sure the author of the letter feels very moral. I'm sure he must feel he is so much better than those of us whom he denigrates for thinking homosexuals are just another group of innocent people being scapegoated.

But I feel one of the greatest sins is hubris. That letter writer suffers from excessive bigotry. In the case of the Bible story, he would have thrown the first stone. How sad! I do feel sorry for those who cannot see the mote in their own eye.

Susanne Gow, Dunedin

Madison was right about minorities

Re: Homosexuality is about morality, not civil rights or discrimination, letter by James M. Hammond of Dunedin, May 1.

I have to respond to the letter. First, let me say that I do not hate fundamentalist Christians who take the Bible literally. I do live in fear of certain Christians who want to put what they believe into our Constitution, thus depriving me of any civil rights.

What fascinated me was the wonderful column about our Founding Fathers on the same page Monday (*Power struggles show that our founders had right idea*, guest column by Patricia Morgan, May 1). These men who fled religious persecution by the Church of England felt separation of church and state was essential for a free United States.

In that column was a quote from James Madison from the *Federalist Papers*: "It is of great importance in a republic not only to guard the society against the oppression of its rulers, but to guard one part of the society against the injustice of the other part. Different interests necessarily exist in different classes of citizens. If a majority be united by a common interest, the rights of the minority will be insecure."

Mr. Madison, on being asked, "What has been the fruit of religion?" responded in part, "ignorance in the laity, in superstition, bigotry and persecution." I fear Mr. Hammond's letter to the editor proves both points that Mr. Madison made.

I had a wonderful time at the Pride in Diversity event in Dunedin. I thank the Dunedin Blue Jays and Mayor Bob Hackworth for standing up for diversity. It is sad that in this day and age, I am lowered to discussing my natural sexual orientation due to the superstition, bigotry and persecution by today's fundamentalist Christians. What Bible literalists want to call immoral and illegal is not what city, county, state and federal laws call illegal. We do not need to be liberated from our sexual orientation any more than any heterosexual needs to be liberated from theirs.

The cities of Dunedin and Largo can do the right thing and enact a human rights ordinance. Doing nothing — the other choice — is the wrong thing and allows the Mr. Hammonds of our community to force their personal religious beliefs on all of us.

Janice Josephine Carney, Largo

Letter writer got part of one line right

Re: Homosexuality is about morality, not civil rights or discrimination, letter by James M. Hammond of Dunedin, May 1.

YOUR VOICE COUNTS

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Letters should be brief and must include the writer's name, city of residence, mailing address and phone number. Letters may be edited for clarity, taste and length. We regret that not all letters can be printed.

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LETTERS

Homosexuality is about morality, not civil rights or discrimination

Re: *Organizers shoot high with annual event*, story, April 21.

Not so fast, mayor.

It is interesting to see Dunedin leaders so enthusiastically get behind the gay and lesbian "Pride in our Diversity" event, sponsored no less by baseball's Dunedin Blue Jays. Mayor Bob Hackworth was quoted as saying, "We have pride, not prejudice," and "We reject intolerance and discrimination."

Citizens should expect a little more discernment and wisdom from the mayor of Dunedin. Mr. Hackworth apparently does not comprehend that homosexuality is a moral issue, not a civil rights or discrimination issue.

The mayor is essentially beating his chest to proclaim that this is "the exact opposite of what happened in Hillsborough County last year." It was Mark Twain who said, "It is amazing how common it is to find people with physical courage, but yet how uncommon it is to find people with moral courage." Attempts to disparage others who point out the immorality of homosexuality are misplaced and merely part of a philosophy that attempts to legitimize behavior that is simply not legitimate, and is, in fact, inherently immoral.

Bigotry can only apply when one is disliked (or even hated) due to factors outside of one's control. Racial bigotry is the obvious example. However, one can control moral choices. There can be no legitimate claim of bigotry when the debate is based on a difference of values, character and/or moral behavioral choices.

Can we treat all persons in Dunedin with dignity and tolerate those with alternative lifestyles? Absolutely. Must we accept and celebrate immoral lifestyles? Absolutely not. Most of us opposed to homosexual conduct do not hate those involved, but rather compassionately wish to see those persons liberated from the lifestyle.

Voters should take note that Mayor Hackworth, and perhaps other commissioners, are showing a propensity to follow the latest pop culture fad. However, the vast majority of Americans (see recent statewide marriage amendment voting) are not buying into it.

Does Mr. Hackworth's reference to "we" properly represent the interests of the majority of Dunedin residents? Our cities need leaders with backbone, character and the willingness to stand up for moral values. Our elected officials should be leaders in our society, not simply followers of the latest trend. Those trends will pass, but character, morals and values will endure.

The gay debate is a moral issue, not a civil rights issue. It is not an issue of equality, it is an issue of right and wrong.

James M. Hammond, Dunedin

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Fight homelessness now

Re: *Without doubt, Casey felt love*, story, April 23.

Now a homeless man's dog has been shot. Guess it is better than a mentally ill man being shot.

Let me say I am one of many who has fed these homeless men, women and children through the years. I have seen few who have alcohol on their breath, and they are thankful of us being there. They say it and their eyes express it.

We need housing now, not in 10 years, where we can teach them God's word and feed their souls and their hunger.

Elizabeth Poelcher, Clearwater

Clearwater shuns its seniors

Clearwater has a large segment of senior citizens who have paid federal, state and local taxes all their lives and now have to do without a senior activity center, while exorbitant sums are being allocated for services to other groups whose contributions, in my opinion, do not, by any stretch of the imagination, compare.

While other cities and towns within our county have active senior programs, the buildings previously used for such programs in Clearwater remain empty.

Who will step up and address this need?

Marilyn Gerrish, Belleair

Our founders thou